

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 24, 2001 LB 305, 543

appropriated here. The second and maybe more important reason is I think it's very important that we focus our efforts. If we do a part of a program here and part of a program over there and a part of a program over there, I think the total impact of our effort will be lessened. If we decide that salaries are the issue, then we should focus directly on salaries and try to focus as much resource on salaries as we can. I think recruitment is certainly an issue that is properly raised and Senator Thompson has done that. But I think that recruitment is raised by the approach we've taken in LB 305; namely, we address it by offering good starting salaries. And again I believe this should be the state focus. I would just mention, as Senator Thompson described, the accountability in this particular proposal and the fact that there is an annual report and the fact that you do see who is paying the loan, who isn't paying the loan, how you get the money if they're not paying the loan and that sort of thing indicates that it does come with a cost in terms of administration. I don't think that's a main issue to look another direction, but I think it is an issue you need to consider. The other thing I would mention which I think is very important is that there are federal loan forgiveness programs. There's a Perkins Loan Program, there is a Stafford Loan Program. These are federally funded programs. They work in the same area that we're talking about with the Attracting Teaching to Excellence Program. They are need based and at least one of them, the Stafford Program, is a relatively new program. It will become available first in this year I believe. The other thing I would mention quickly and Senator Schimek can talk more about this is the AmeriCorps Program provides this similar type of help for people aspiring to teaching careers. So again the point here is that there are federal programs that deal with this issue. We have a place I think that we more appropriately focus our state dollars, and I think we should do that. I think we should focus our state dollars elsewhere and allow these federal programs to treat this area. The other thing I would mention also is that should we decide to go in this area, there's an alternative for us that I think in my view at least makes more sense. We had a bill introduced by Senator Kristensen that dealt with tuition reimbursement. This involved payments directly to schools. It also involved public schools, but it involved anyone who teaches in that school. So it didn't